

flights of
imagination

recent works by
**cecilia z.
miguez**



*"we can lie
in the language
of dress or
try to tell
the truth;
but unless
we are naked
and bald, it
is impossible
to be silent."*

alison lurie



flights of imagination
recent works by
cecilia z. miguez



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cecilia z. miguez
flights of imagination

We travel in planes, trains and automobiles. We also travel in our minds imagining not only real places like Bali or Barcelona, but places that do not exist in longitude and latitude. These are flights of imagination into states of being, expressions of longing and projections into who we might be. The art of Cecilia Miguez takes us on such a journey, sometimes gloriously soaring or sailing, sometimes humbly pulled along in a dogcart or rolling upon a single wheel to our destiny. Alternately majestic and absurd, sobering and humorous, these works are, as the artist says, "part of my search for meaning."

In this her fifth show at Louis Stern Fine Arts, Miguez continues her journey via her chosen medium of sculpture, using the elongated female figure she adopted as her muse and alter ego some 25 years ago. Elegantly constructed with carved wood and cast bronze, found objects whimsically integrated, these works suggest flight or travel. There are the ostensible conveyances -- the figure in *The White Horse* (Plate 2) stands beside a horse, all harnessed up and ready to seat a rider or to pull a cart. Each of the four pieces in the *Trattato* series features a "pilot" attached to a flying machine -- inspired by the famous drawings of Leonardo da Vinci. Even when figures dominate, as in the bronze figures lined in static poses in *Dream (Don't you ever, ever)* (Plate 16), the figure at the far right end has a foot extended, about to step off the platform the others are firmly affixed to. The central grouping of three are aghast that she is doing this but our heroine blithely, perhaps even blissfully, seems intent on stepping off this dimension into the next.

Especially distilled is *Magic Wheel* (Plate 14) with its small figure standing atop a large wheel. It suggests the Elizabethan concept of the Wheel of Fortune -- one day we might be at the top of this wheel reveling in our glory and lucre, the next we may find ourselves tumbling headlong into calamity and despair. It's the theme of many tragedies by the most celebrated playwright of this period, William Shakespeare. He addressed the power of Fortune, as well as the human will to overcome misfortune, in this line from "Henry VI,"

"Though Fortune's malice overthrow my state,
My mind exceeds the compass of her wheel."

There is something wonderfully theatrical about Miguez's figures. They pose in disjointed narratives. They wear masks and painted faces. Like actors, they hold their heads high on upstretched necks, and their torsos are straight, which further emphasizes their lengthy proportions. Of course, one may be reminded of the elongated figures of El Greco and of Giacometti, both used the exaggeration to suggest higher realms of being. Miguez's work also makes me think of the statuary of ancient Egypt, in their formality and dignity and strength. Like those Egyptian stone carvings of kings, queens and royal advisors, Miguez's figures are iconic. The difference is that in her case the references are not specifically to earthly power -- details on the headdress of Egyptian royalty symbolized rule over Upper and Lower Egypt, for example. She is much more concerned with metaphor pertaining to emotional and experiential states of being -- to the spirit.

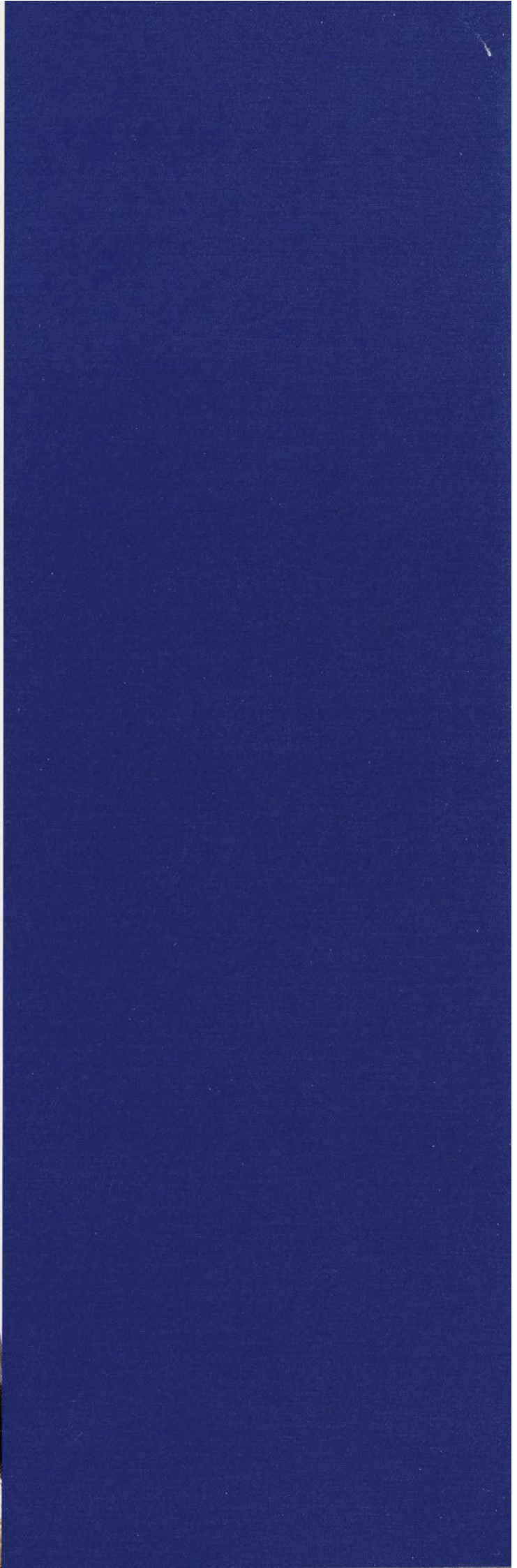
In fact, despite being known as a keen observer of the human body and a consummate draftsman, Leonardo da Vinci believed that it was essential to capture the intentions of the mind, "le passioni dell'anima." In his "Libro di pittura," his own advice to artists while sketching was to "decide broadly on the position of the limbs of your figures and attend first to the movements appropriate to the mental attitudes of the creatures in the narrative, rather than to the beauty and quality of their limbs."

Of course, being Leonardo and a Renaissance man, beauty and quality were not discarded -- we can see from his sublime drawings and paintings that they were important considerations. However, they were not his first priority.

themes and variations

Today there are nearly two-dozen works in Miguez's spacious studio -- some on pedestals, some stacked on tables and ledges. Most of them are finished, with the remainder soon to be finished for the upcoming show. Gregorian chant is playing in the background and one feels a serenity here as if in a Medieval cloister.

On the large worktable lie clues to her inspirations -- books about Medieval illuminated manuscripts, Byzantine icons, Leonardo da Vinci, and Hans Holbein the Younger. As mentioned, the pilots in *Trattato* were



he foresaw the parachute and the helicopter. Miguez opens a book about Holbein, finding a drawing of a woman wearing a cap topped with a large puffed-up disc. She gave this headdress to **Penelope** (Plate 8), who stands nearby on two oversized legs and stocking-shoes. In fact, Miguez started this work with these legs and their hefty thighs. Then she figured out the head and hands -- how large they would be in proportion to the legs (much smaller), and what the hands would be doing (knitting). Then she worked in sections of antique boxes she collects and this became the figure's torso. It wasn't until the end that Miguez found just the right name for this patient, domestic saint -- Penelope, Ulysses' wife, who so resolutely and bravely stayed at home, trying to hold the estate and her own virtue intact while her husband went abroad to fight an endless war.

The artist sketches out her ideas, quite simply, perhaps following Leonardo's advice, each piece changing as she works on it. "Sometimes things don't work or they don't look the way I want them to," she explains. "Sometimes they evolve into a different personality than that I originally thought." But that evolution is a pleasurable process, which results in works that are perhaps as much a discovery for her as for the viewer. "I really enjoy letting them evolve into something else," she says. "That also gives me ideas for another piece and another piece."

Many works include found objects -- she gathers them in second-hand and antique shops and flea markets. The head of **Knight** (Plate 4) wears a leather helmet -- adapted from a boot. The torso of **Silent Stroll** (Plate 17) is a large wooden churn. She especially likes the delicate curve of wooden pillows or headrests from Africa and Asia. She has a collection of them which she sometimes places on the heads of her figures or sometimes uses as models for making her own headdresses.

There are of course recurrent themes and motifs. One is quickly struck by the similarity of the figures -- they are clones of one another with their well-toned, elongated female bodies, their well-defined and pretty heads, always bald unless wearing a headdress, though we assume they are bald beneath that. In terms of scale they may differ -- some are smaller, just under a foot high, and the largest one, **Penelope** (Plate 8), towers at nearly 8 feet -- but not in terms of proportion. Miguez likes these generic, nearly robotic features because she

doesn't want the features to become a distraction. After all, that's not what is important about them.

Though they may not look like us or behave like us, they are a kind of alter ego. First, for the artist herself, who seriously took up art-making as a child and has been furiously productive in the last decade. In the most basic way, travel is going from here to there -- that is, it is about transition. Miguez embarked on her sculpture series as she was undergoing a time of great personal transition.

Yet there are many kinds of travel and many ways to travel. I think her work also expresses -- in its austere formality -- a wish to travel serenely even elegantly no matter what the circumstances.

Miguez recognizes the intrinsic absurdity in some of the conveyances her figures take. For the **Trattato** series she inserted a contradiction by deliberately making the wings and propellers "extra heavy," she says. Likewise, in **Cricket** (Plate 7) a group of three figures share a dugout canoe from which the bottom has been cut out, so their feet extend below. Not an effective boat, to be sure -- perhaps they will walk to their destination instead. Furthermore, they are rowing with a giant silver spoon, a takeoff of a Uruguay saying, written around the pedestal upon which they stand -- "sticking your spoon into someone's business," or being meddlesome.

Miguez gives an easy laugh explaining this. She enjoys visual puns and humor is an important aspect of her work. It is her practice to work on several pieces at once. She works on one as the varnish of another is drying and yet another is awaiting a bronze section to be cast at the foundry. Also, ideas need time to cook. One of the pilots remains unfinished -- the standing figure is done, but only a block of wood is mounted behind her, as the artist considers what shape the wing or contraption will eventually take.

"Making these pieces is a way to find out who I am," says Miguez. "My work is my own journey."

Scarlet Cheng



plates

1

pilot on skis

2004

bronze and wood

19 x 16 x 14 inches

48.3 x 40.6 x 35.6 centimeters





2

the white horse

2004

bronze and wood

36 x 30 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches

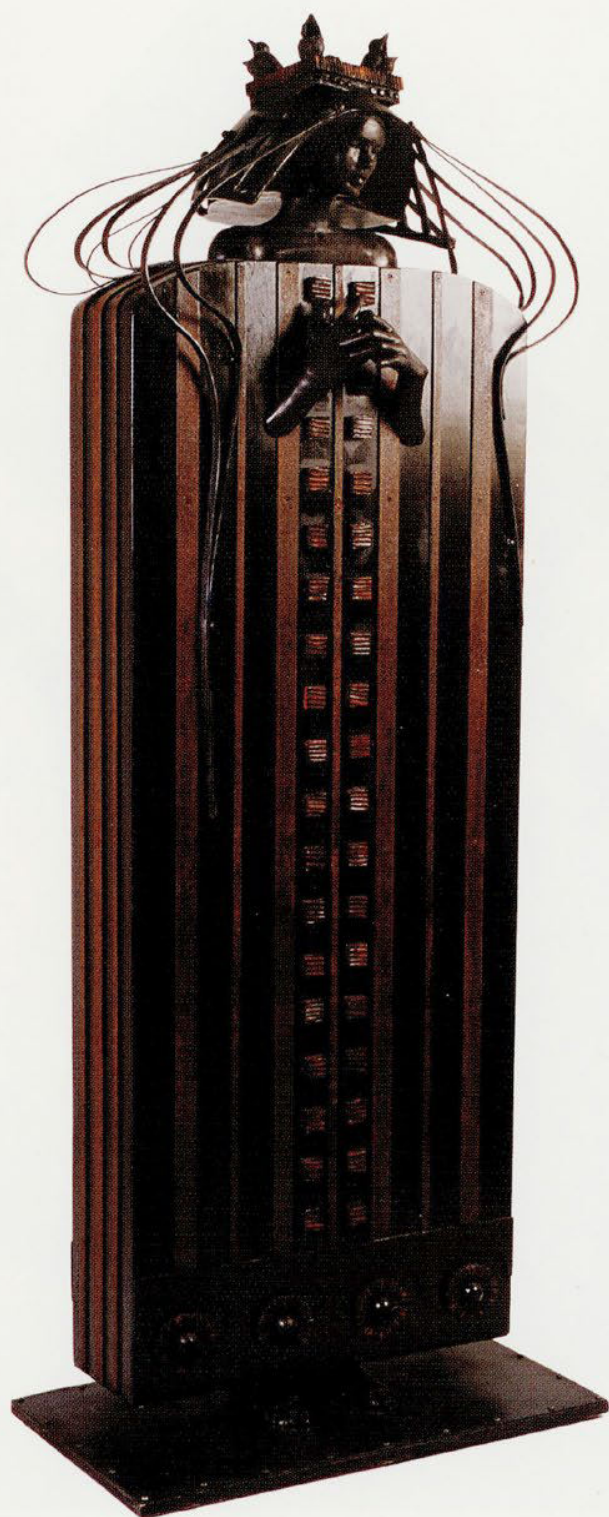
91.4 x 77.5 x 39.4 centimeters





3
the early song

2004
bronze, wood and iron
81 x 31 x 16 inches
205.7 x 78.7 x 40.6 centimeters





4
knight

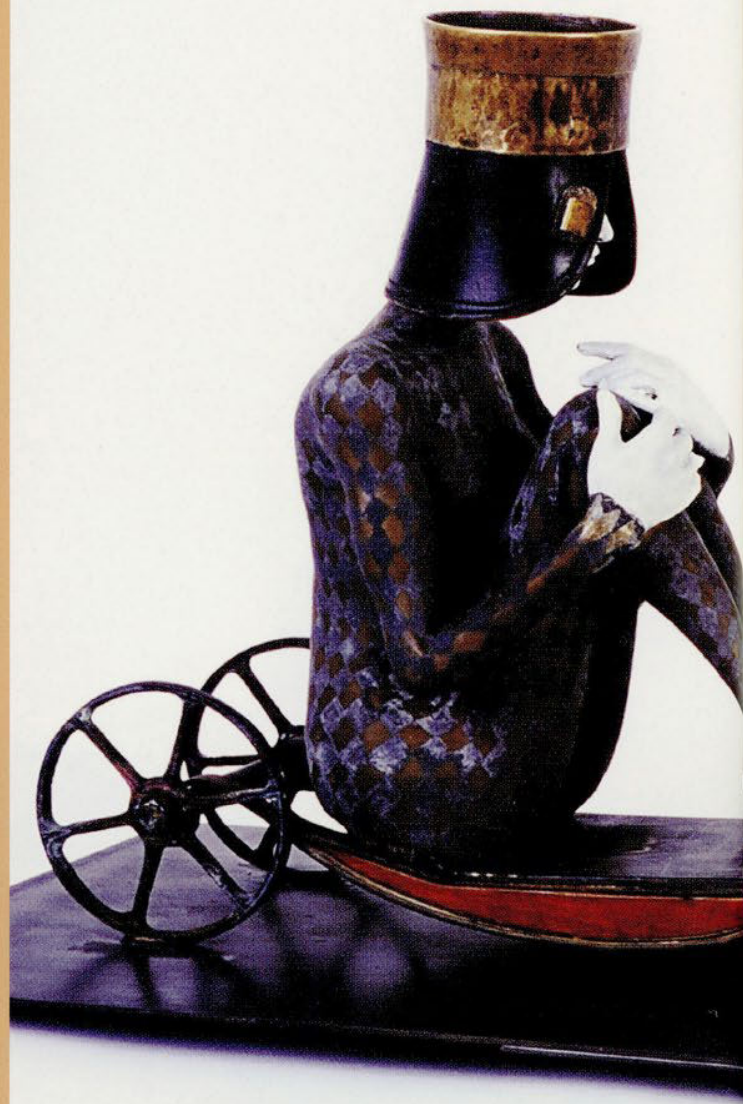
2004
wood, bronze, iron and leather
65 x 18 x 16 inches
165.1 x 45.7 x 40.6 centimeters





5
the safe return

2004
bronze, wood, iron and leather
17 x 40 x 12 inches
43.2 x 101.6 x 30.5 centimeters





6

trattato no. a 421

2004

wood and bronze

77 x 23 x 20 inches

195.6 x 58.4 x 50.8 centimeters





7

the cricket

2004
bronze and wood
38 x 36 x 12 inches
96.5 x 91.4 x 30.5 centimeters





8

penelope

2004

wood, bronze and iron

90 x 29 x 25 inches

228.6 x 73.7 x 63.5 centimeters



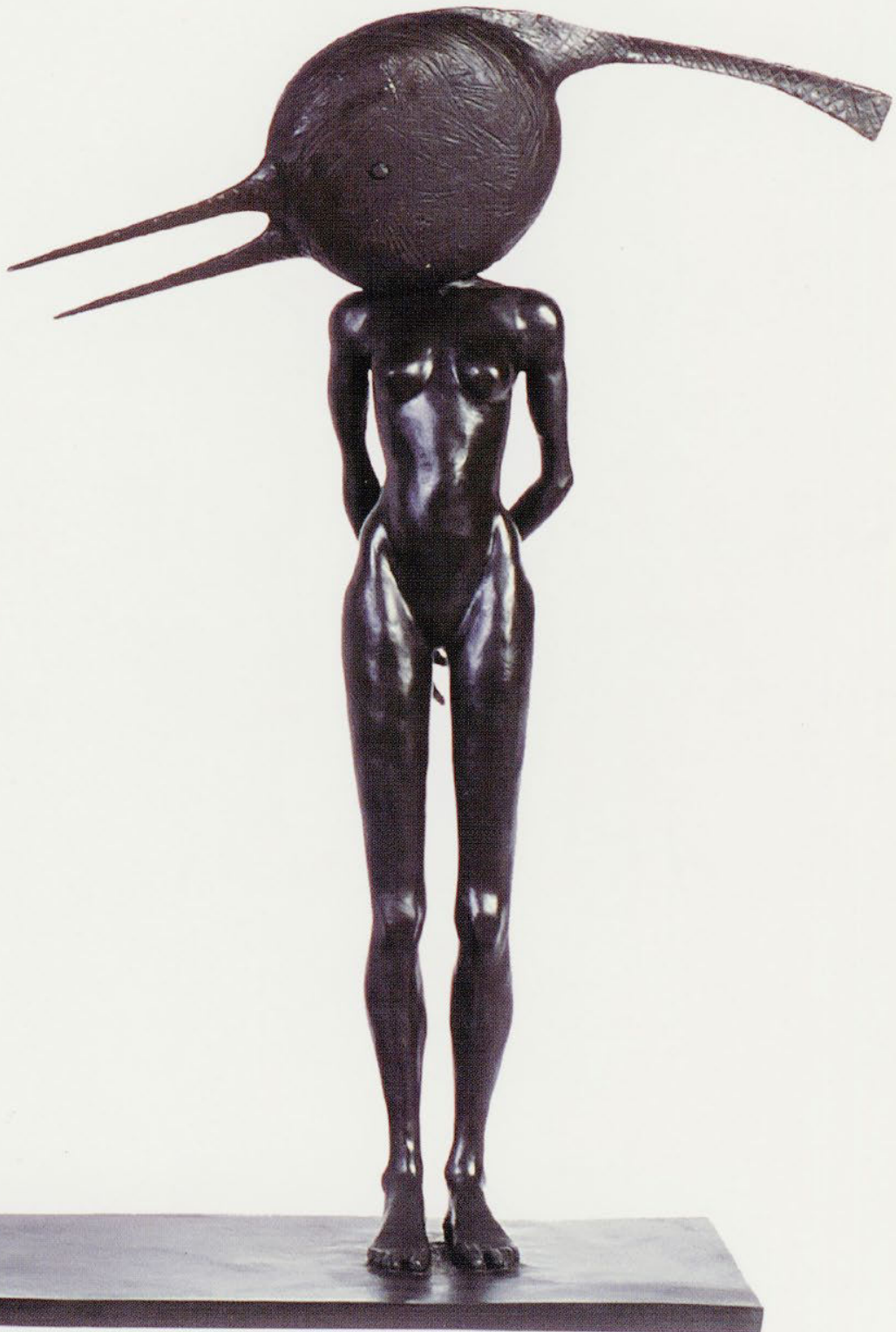


9

another script

2004
patinated bronze
edition of 6
49 x 47 x 11 inches
124.5 x 119.4 x 27.9 centimeters





10
the blue glove

2004
patinated bronze and wood
60 x 17 x 12 inches
152.4 x 43.2 x 30.5 centimeters





ÆTATIS SINE
XLIX

II

trattato no. f 643

2004

bronze and wood

36 x 25 x 25 inches

91.4 x 63.5 x 63.5 centimeters

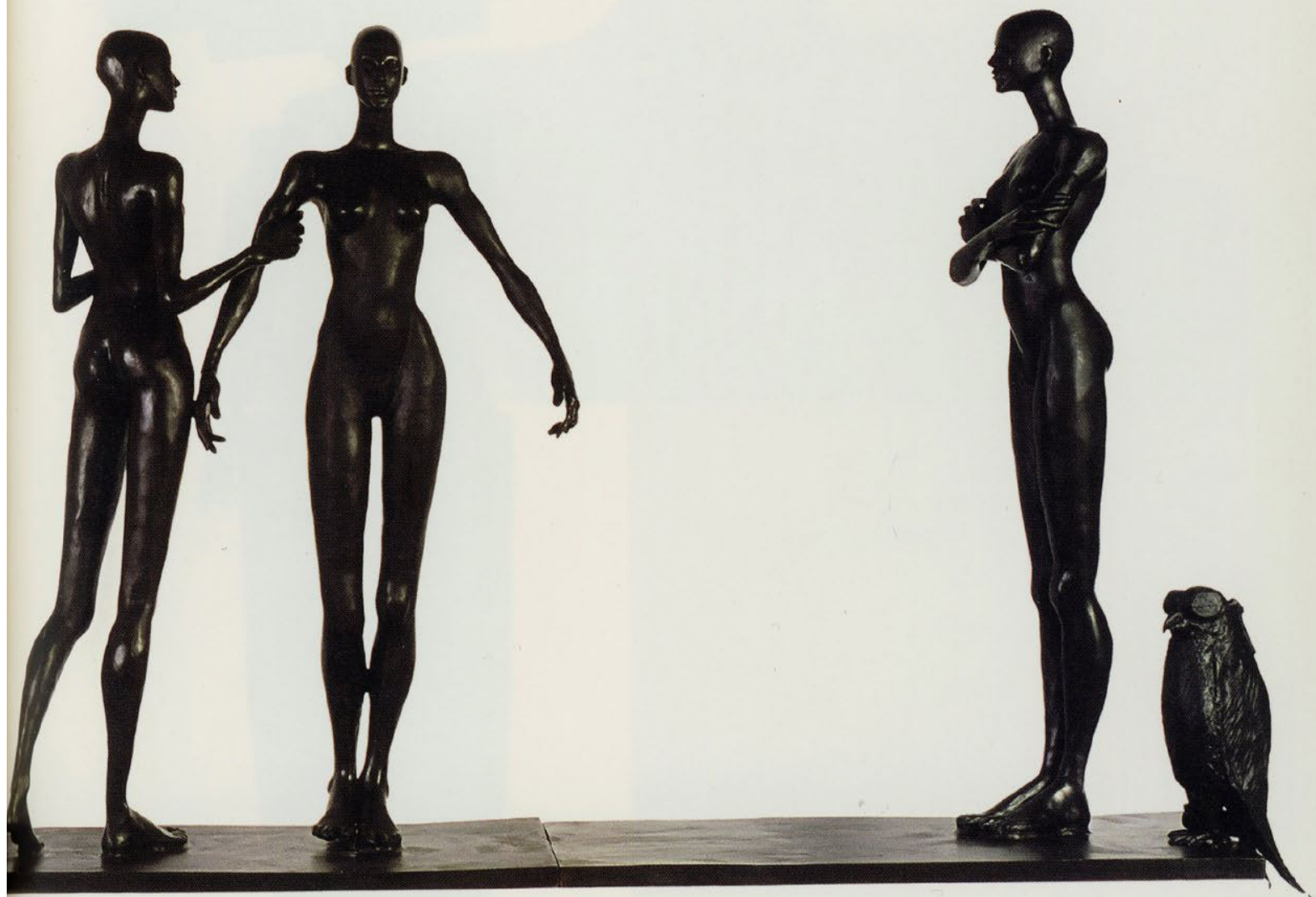




12
the falcon
(desire to fly II)

2004
patinated bronze
34 x 77 x 11 inches
86.4 x 195.6 x 27.9 centimeters





13
anticipation-
the secret scroll

2004
bronze and wood
82 x 32 x 22 inches
208.3 x 81.3 x 55.9 centimeters





14
magic wheel

2004
bronze, wood and iron
65 x 24 x 6 inches
165.1 x 61 x 15.2 centimeters





15

trattato no. c 150

2004

wood and bronze

50 x 48 x 24 inches

127 x 121.9 x 61 centimeters



16
dream
(don't you ever, ever)

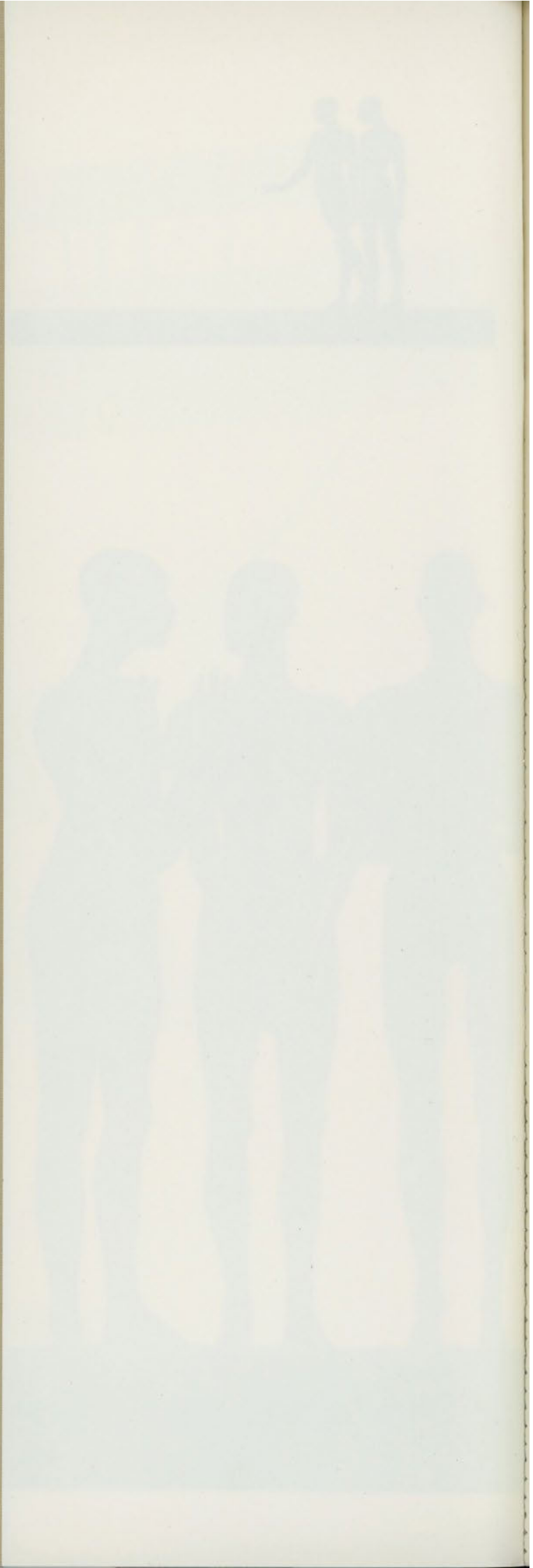
2003
patinated bronze
15 x 58 x 5 inches
38.1 x 147.3 x 12.7 centimeters





17
silent stroll

2004
bronze, wood and iron
66 x 22 x 20 inches
167.6 x 55.9 x 50.8 centimeters





18

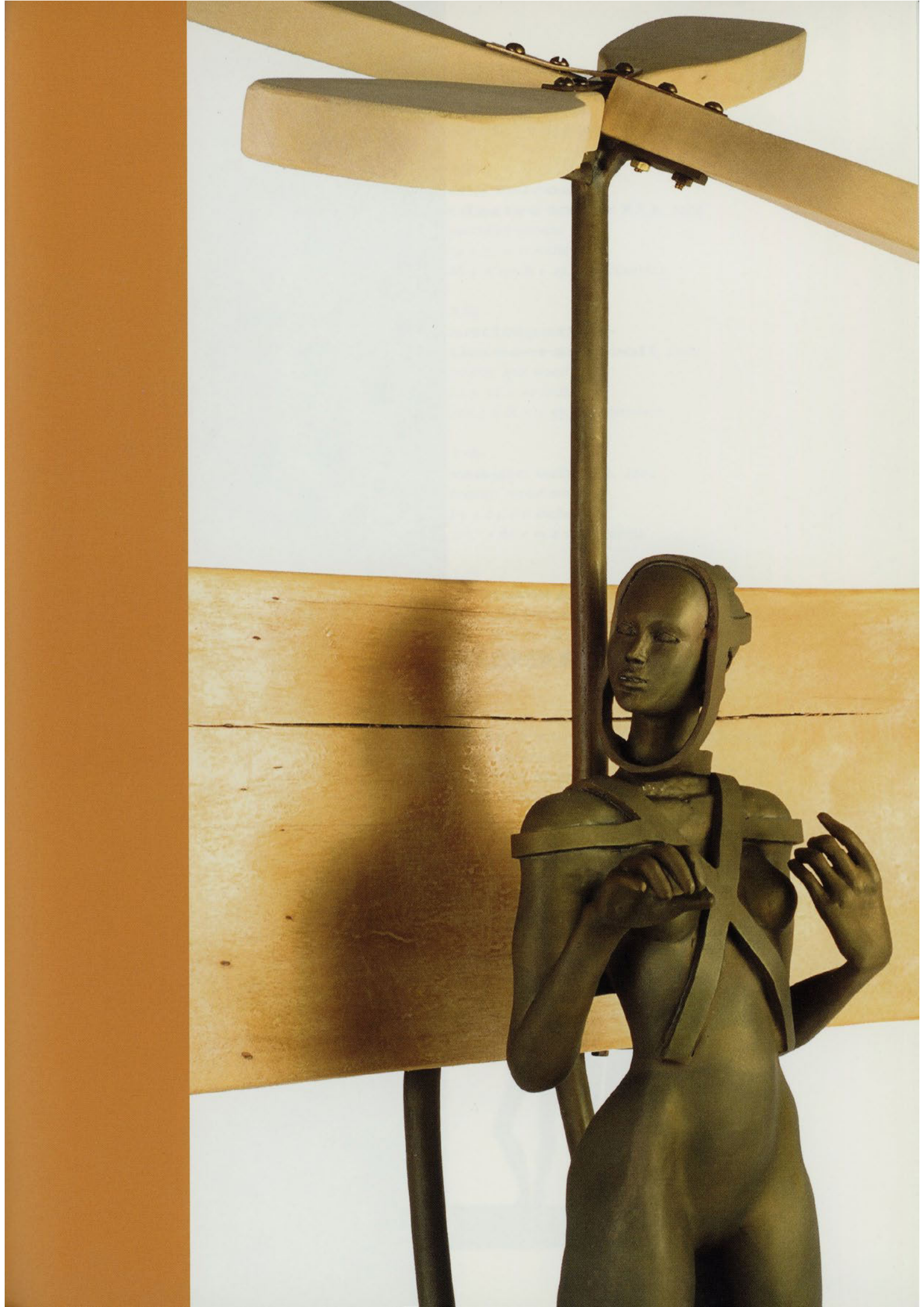
trattato no. e 255

(detail) 2004

bronze and wood

52 x 64 x 24 inches

132.1 x 162.6 x 61 centimeters



check list



1

pilot on skis, 2004
bronze and wood
19 x 16 x 14 inches
48.3 x 40.6 x 35.6 centimeters

2

the white horse, 2004
bronze and wood
36 x 30 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches
91.4 x 77.5 x 39.4 centimeters

3

the early song, 2004
bronze, wood and iron
81 x 31 x 16 inches
205.7 x 78.7 x 40.6 centimeters

4

knight, 2004
wood, bronze, iron and leather
65 x 18 x 16 inches
165.1 x 45.7 x 40.6 centimeters

5

the safe return, 2004
bronze, wood, iron and leather
17 x 40 x 12 inches
43.2 x 101.6 x 30.5 centimeters

6

trattato no. a 421, 2004
wood and bronze
77 x 23 x 20 inches
195.6 x 58.4 x 50.8 centimeters

7

the cricket, 2004
bronze and wood
38 x 36 x 12 inches
96.5 x 91.4 x 30.5 centimeters

8

penelope, 2004
wood, bronze and iron
90 x 29 x 25 inches
228.6 x 73.7 x 63.5 centimeters

9

another script, 2004
patinated bronze
edition of 6
49 x 47 x 11 inches
124.5 x 119.4 x 27.9 centimeters

10

the blue glove, 2004
patinated bronze and wood
60 x 17 x 12 inches
152.4 x 43.2 x 30.5 centimeters

11

trattato no. f 643, 2004
bronze and wood
36 x 25 x 25 inches
91.4 x 63.5 x 63.5 centimeters

12

the falcon
(desire to fly II), 2004
patinated bronze
34 x 77 x 11 inches
86.4 x 195.6 x 27.9 centimeters

13

anticipation-
the secret scroll, 2004
bronze and wood
82 x 32 x 22 inches
208.3 x 81.3 x 55.9 centimeters

14

magic wheel, 2004
bronze, wood and iron
65 x 24 x 6 inches
165.1 x 61 x 15.2 centimeters

15

trattato no. c 150, 2004
wood and bronze
50 x 48 x 24 inches
127 x 121.9 x 61 centimeters

16

dream
(don't you ever, ever), 2003
patinated bronze
15 x 58 x 5 inches
38.1 x 147.3 x 12.7 centimeters

17

silent stroll, 2004
bronze, wood and iron
66 x 22 x 20 inches
167.6 x 55.9 x 50.8 centimeters

18

trattato no. e 255, 2004
bronze and wood
52 x 64 x 24 inches
132.1 x 162.6 x 61 centimeters

education
solo exhibitions



cecilia z. miguez

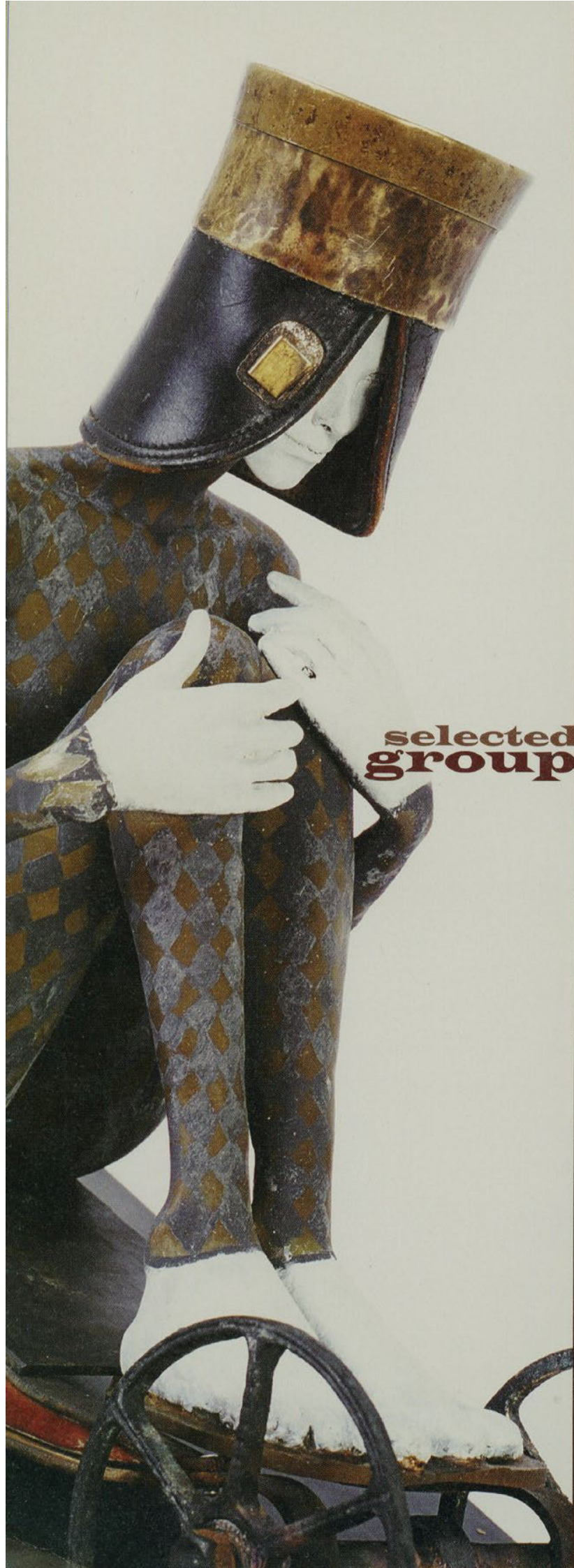
Born in Montevideo, Uruguay; lives in Los Angeles, California.

education

- 1990 *Studied goldsmithing with Michael Norman Bayes, UCLA, Los Angeles, California.*
- 1980 *Studied painting, Vicente Martin, Montevideo, Uruguay.*
- 1978 *Scholarship in Art, San Fernando University of Fine Arts, Madrid, Spain.*
- 1977 *Studied with Carlos Sgarbi, Circulo de Bellas Artes, Montevideo, Uruguay.*
- 1975 *Studied painting with Nelson Leites, Montevideo, Uruguay.*
- 1971 *Studied painting with Maria Cardu de Callebaut, Montevideo, Uruguay.*

solo exhibitions

- 2003 *Riverside, California, Riverside Art Museum, Journeys, April 17 – May 24.*
- 2002 *West Hollywood, California, Louis Stern Fine Arts, Transmigrations, September 14 – October 26.*
Washington D.C., The Uruguay Cultural Foundation for the Arts, Transmigrations, October 9 – November 5.
Coral Gables, Florida, Praxis Gallery, New Sculpture, January 4 – February 4.
- 2001 *Buenos Aires, Argentina, Praxis Gallery, Barcos y Sirenas, August 24 – September 4.*
West Hollywood, California, Louis Stern Fine Arts, Escultura, March 3 – April 14.
- 1999 *West Hollywood, California, Louis Stern Fine Arts, New Work, September 16 – October 30.*
Buenos Aires, Argentina, Praxis Gallery, April 6 – April 24.
- 1998 *West Hollywood, California, Louis Stern Fine Arts, Recent Work, January 13 – February 28.*
- 1997 *Montevideo, Uruguay, Museo de Arte Americano de Maldonado, February 15 – 28.*
- 1996 *Buenos Aires, Argentina, Praxis Gallery, October 15 – November 6.*
Montevideo, Uruguay, Figari Gallery, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 20 – 30.
- 1992 *University of California, Los Angeles, International Student Center, May 15 – 29.*
- 1985 *Montevideo, Uruguay, Casa de Teatro Gallery, August.*
Punta del Este, Uruguay, Cantegril Country Club, January.
- 1980 *Punta del Este, Uruguay, Amalfi Gallery, January.*
- 1978 *Montevideo, Uruguay, Zorrilla de San Martin Museum, September 4 – 15.*
Punta del Este, Uruguay, Cantegril Country Club, January.



selected
group exhibitions

- 2003 *Italy, Firenze Biennial, December 6 – 16. Representing Uruguay.*
- Long Beach, California, Long Beach Museum of Art, Suenos y Encuentros: Works from the Collection by Latin American Masters, October 4 – Jan 25, 2004.*
- Baltimore Gallery International, Cecilia Z. Miguez & Arturo Mallman, September 18 – October 26.*
- Los Angeles, California, Mount St. Mary's College & Southern California Chapter of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Shouts, Whispers, and Cheers, February 9 – March 29.*
- 2001 *Montevideo, Uruguay, 49 Salon Nacional de Artes Visuales, August 25.*
- 2000 *Los Angeles, California, Museum of Contemporary Art, MOCA Auction, April 29.*
- Los Angeles City College, Da Vinci Gallery, The New Classicists, March 1 – April 6.*
- California State University, Los Angeles, Fine Arts Gallery, The Right to Assemble, January 31 – February 29.*
- 1999 *Bakersfield Museum of Art, California, A Subliminal Message: The Works of Laddie John Dill and Cecilia Miguez, December 9 – January 14, 2000.*
- Long Beach, California, Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Art of the Southern Cone, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, October 1 – January 31, 2000.*
- Long Beach, California, Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Latin American Retablos, December.*
- 1998 *Cal State University, Los Angeles, Luckman Gallery, The Labyrinth of Multitude: Contemporary Latin American Artists in Los Angeles, September 24 – November 6.*
- Los Angeles, California, Loyola Marymount University, Laband Gallery, The Drawing Group: An Emerging School of Los Angeles.*
- 1997 *Long Beach, California, Museum of Latin American Art (MoLAA), Dancing the Marvelously Real (with Sergio Camporeale), January – March.*
- Long Beach, California, Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Archangels in the Latin American Tradition, Contemporary Interpretations.*
- Santa Monica, California, Santa Monica College Art Gallery, Reconfigured II: Drawing & Sculpture.*
- Pasadena, California, Tirage Art Gallery, Trilogy.*
- 1996 *West Hollywood, California, Louis Stern Fine Arts, Imaginary Realities: Surrealism Then and Now, September 19 – November 12.*
- Montrose, California, Village Square Gallery.*
- 1992 *Los Angeles City Hall, Hispanic Heritage Exhibit.*
- 1991 *Santa Monica, California, Santa Monica Public Library, Arte Latinoamericano.*
- 1986 *Sacramento, California, Matrix Gallery, American Competition.*
- Toronto, Canada, Del Bello Gallery, International Competition of Mini-sculpture.*
- 1983 *Buenos Aires, Argentina, Galeria del Portal.*
- 1981 *Salto, Uruguay, Bienal de Pintura.*
- 1977 *Montevideo, Uruguay, New Young Artist Competition.*

public collections **articles and reviews**

public collections

Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California.

Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, California.

Museum of Contemporary Art, Montevideo, Uruguay.

Ministerio Transporte (MTOP), Montevideo, Uruguay.

articles and reviews

- 2003 McNatt, Glenn. "Two Uruguayans See Surrealism's Darkness and Light." *The Baltimore Sun* 16 October.
Gottlieb, Marie. "Terrific Triplicity." *Press Telegram* 9 October.
Hammack, Marchelle. "Mystery, Poetry & Suspense." *Architectural Digest*, October, *Zen Story* (article and photo).
Knaff, Devoran L. "Making of the Gods." *The Press Enterprise* May.
- 2002 McNatt, Glenn. "What You See Isn't What You Get." *The Baltimore Sun* February.
Lasarow, Bill. "Cecilia Miguez." *Art Scene* September
- 2001 "Pluralidad de lenguajes y participantes de calidad." *Busqueda* (Uruguay) 30 August.
Nieto, Margarita. "Escultura by Cecilia Miguez." *ArtScene* March.
"Best Bet." *Los Angeles Times* March.
- 2000 Seckler, Judy. "The Road to Respect." *Pasadena Weekly* 3 February.
Woodard, Josef. "Brave, New Millennium." *Los Angeles Times* 28 January.
Chattopadhyay, Collette. "Cecilia Miguez." *Sculpture Magazine* January/February.
- 1999 Chang, Richard. "Art Just Behind the Mind's Eye is at Fingertips." *The Bakersfield Californian*.
Frank, Peter. "Art Pick of the Week: The Labyrinth of Multitude." *LA Weekly* 29 October.
Rodriguez Flores, Juan. "Figuras que Hablan." *La Opinión* 10 November.
Squirru, Rafael. "Dos Muestras de Jerarquia." *La Nacion* (Buenos Aires) 25 April.
Ambrosini, Silvia. "Ceremonia de Materiales." *Pagina/12* (Buenos Aires) 20 April.
- 1998 Wilson, William. "More Angst than Answers Created..." *Los Angeles Times* 11 April.
Iannaccone, Carmine. "The Drawing Group at Loyola Marymount." *LA Weekly* 10 April.
"Exhibición." *La Prensa de Los Angeles* 19 February.
Rodriguez Flores, Juan. "Magia en la Escultura." *La Opinión* 8 February.
- 1997 Camarena, Ricardo. "Casi el Paraíso." *La Opinión* 29 December.
Schoenkopf, Rebecca. "Hark! Los Angeles..." *Orange County Weekly* 19 December.
Carro Amorin, Maylin. "Muestra de C.Z.M. en Los Angeles." *La Mañana*, (Uruguay).
Carpenter, Diane. "Carlsbad Recognizes..." *North County Times* 30 March.
"Variety in Carlsbad's Art Exhibition." *The Beach News* 27 March.
Torres, Alfredo. "Inquietante Poetica." *Posdata* (Uruguay) 28 February.
Camarena, Ricardo. "Arte y Danza." *La Opinión* 21 February.
"Tesoros de Arte Fill a Museum in Long Beach." *The Orange County Register* 23 February.
Miller, Amanda. "Beyond Mexico." *UCLA Daily Bruin*.
Di Maggio, Nelson. "Cecilia Miguez+++" *Brecha* (Uruguay) 21 February.
Berthet, Marcela. "Circo, Magia y Surrealismo." *Búsqueda* (Uruguay) 20 February.
Carro Amorin, Maylin. "C.Z.M. entre Nosotros." *La Mañana* (Uruguay) 18 February.
De Maggio, Nelson. "Artes Plasticas." *La República* (Uruguay) 17 February.
Saltzgaver, Harry. "Exhibit Moves with Tempo..." *Union Gazette* 30 January.
"Latin Tempos: Dancing the Marvelously Real." *The Orange County Register* 23 January.
- 1996 Di Maggio, Nelson. "Los major del ano." *Brecha* (Uruguay) 30 December.
Roubaud, Elisa. "Recorrido de buen nivel." *El País* (Uruguay) 9 October.
Berthet, Marcela. "Un Coctel de Magia y Mitos." *Búsqueda* (Uruguay) 4 October.
Carro Amorin, Maylin. "C.Z.M. las Excelencias de una Artista." *La Mañana* (Uruguay).
Nieto, Margarita. "Mito y fantasia en la escultura contemporanea." *La Opinión* 18 August.
Rodriguez Flores, Juan. "Las Dimensiones Artisticas de C.Z.M." *La Opinión*.
Ackerman, Gerald M. *American Arts Quarterly* Spring Issue.
- 1991 Gonzalez, Luis. "C.M. expone pinturas y esculturas en UCLA." *La Opinion* May.
Martinez, Marilyn. "Accent on Spanish Speakers." *L.A. Times Westside* 11 September.
- 1986 "Premio Nacional de Pintura." *La Manana* (Uruguay) 24 October.
- 1985 de Espada, Roberto. "A beneficio de inventario." *El Dia* (Uruguay) 27 July.
Haber, Alicia. "Tres Jovenes." *El Pais* (Uruguay).
- 1978 Castillo, Delores. "Cecilia Miguez." *El Pais* (Uruguay).
"C.M.: Entre el Poema y el Color." *El Dia* (Uruguay).

Cover: *trattato no. a 421*, 2004

Cover inside: *The White Horse (detail)*, 2004, quote: Lurie, Alison, *The Language of Clothes*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1981.

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